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Hero Tales in the Rural School

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THERE is so little knowledge of the heroes of the past presented in the grades, that students coming to college are scarcely aware of the existence of Ulysses, Agamemnon, Siegfried, the Cid and a score of others. It is with this great body of material, the source of much of our literature and the material from which poetry is made, that one must deal, while children are still in the grades and at an age when psychologically children are interested in heroes. In school systems where books are plentiful and libraries around the corner, material covering these subjects is not hard to find. The situation in the rural school is more difficult. Books are at a premium, teachers are only sketchily prepared, and heroes were born hundreds of years ago.

I therefore wish to present a simple plan organized to fit the needs of a rural group and aiming to acquaint boys and girls with some of the heroes of the past and to lead them to an appreciation of some of the heroes of the present.

Presuming that we have a group of nine or ten children, from the fourth to the eighth grades inclusive, I should begin with the Robin Hood tales. Maude Radford Warren's *ROBIN HOOD*, or Pyle's *SOME MERRY ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD*, would furnish reading ma-

terial for fourth and fifth graders. The sixth might be working with Pyle's complete book, and the seventh and eighth with the Robin Hood ballads, from which source many of these stories have come.

Introduce the children to Robin Hood by locating on a map, Nottinghamshire, Sherwood forest and other important places mentioned. If you do not have a map, make one on the board. Let the children tell in class the different stories of how Robin Hood got members to join his band. Discuss the principles for which he stood and the wrongs which he tried to correct. Let the children work out an archery contest on the sand-table for the younger children, on the playground for the older ones. Let them work out a play or pageant introducing the characters, planning costumes, and organizing the performance. Let them go on excursions into the woods and fields, let them get the outdoor atmosphere of the stories, the spirit of helpfulness to one another, of loyalty to a leader. Let the children choose a Robin Hood from their group and organize a band with some definite things to do. Furnish as many books as possible for the carrying out of these projects but let the children find and report the information. In other words let them live the material.

In considering the King Arthur cycle it is not well to begin before the fifth grade, so perhaps the same group might study that a second year. The fourth graders in Robin Hood would be fifth graders in King Arthur. As Robin Hood was the hero of the people so King Arthur was the hero of the nobility. The atmosphere has changed. King Arthur is every inch a king. He organizes a society of knights, a form of government which aims to right wrong and to succor the oppressed. His knights pledge themselves with an oath to follow the king. All the accoutrements of chivalry, tournaments, and good manners are present. A spiritual element in the story of the Grail furnishes the incentive for noble deeds. As Robin Hood was lived on the playground, so King Arthur may be lived in the schoolroom. A series of achievements may be arranged, some simple enough for the younger children, and knighthood conferred upon those who have succeeded in their undertakings. At the time of knighthood, children may take the names of King Arthur's knights, may attempt to imitate them in matters of courtesy, may take the oath which seems most fitting. Boys may prepare for themselves wooden swords, and make a round table for the sand-table. Girls may dress clothespins to look like knights, King, Queen, and pages. KING ARTHUR AND HIS KNIGHTS, by Maud Radford Warren would make a suitable text for class work in the fifth grade. Sidney Lanier's BOY'S KING ARTHUR, would be a suitable text for sixth and seventh grades. The age of chivalry should be stressed in the fifth and sixth grades, while the search for the Grail should be the element most interesting with older children. The love element should be minimized in the grades. A feature that should not be neglected is that of the magician, Merlin, and the fairy-like element that appears in some of the stories, for instance Arthur's ability to draw the sword from the stone. There are many poetical selections which might be read to children, and pictures,

such as that of Sir Galahad, which introduce the child to the character and dignity of knighthood as well as familiarize him with the armor and training of a knight. THE LITTLE DUKE, by Charlotte Yonge would be interesting supplementary reading, also MASTER SKYLARK, by John Bennett. The Stories of HOW CEDRIC BECAME A KNIGHT, THE GREEN KNIGHT, and others which are scattered through the readers would be helpful.

Children who have lived the parts of the heroes of knighthood over the period of a month, while they are studying them, are not likely to forget King Arthur as a hero in literature, and any dramatization of special sections which they can work out for themselves, or play together without respect to an audience, will be an incentive to further perusal of knightly tales.

By the time that your fourth graders have reached the sixth grade they will be acquiring some knowledge of early European history. Nothing could give them a better background or furnish them with material which would have a more far-reaching effect upon their lives than a study of the Greek heroes associated with the Trojan war. As an approach to that material some of the more simple of the Greek myths might be told orally by the teacher or read to the children, in order that they might become familiar with the names of the gods and goddesses and learn of their relation to the Greek people and their religion. The human characteristics and attributes which these gods acquired in the eyes of the Greeks should be brought out. The fact that they were accepted by the Romans as the Greeks passed them on (except in name), and the reason we use their Roman names more frequently, should also be matters for class discussion. The concepts of beauty and the art expressed in statuary should help children to a knowledge of Greek ideals, customs, costumes, home life, art, education and amusements. When the important gods and goddesses have become familiar, the Greek heroes of the Iliad and the

Odyssey may be introduced. Since the story of the Iliad began in a myth, the transition from the myth to the hero-tale is not hard to make. The simple accounts of *THE ILIAD* and *THE ODYSSEY FOR BOYS AND GIRLS*, by A. J. Church will furnish suitable text book material for sixth graders and mature children may read Bryant and Palmer if they are accessible. The element of war which is the central theme of the Iliad should be minimized and the emphasis put upon the home life, customs, methods of warfare, travel, superstitions, religious beliefs, art and education. These elements of Greek life are more fully developed in the Odyssey, and consequently it would be advisable to make the Iliad an approach to the Odyssey, selecting only those scenes and incidents which would lead to a fuller appreciation of the Greek people and an active interest in the character of Odysseus. Through this interest should be developed the knowledge of the lives of a great people. Maps of Odysseus' journeyings might be made, and the knowledge of geography of the time and its effects upon the beliefs of the people explained. An outline of the incidents in Odysseus' travels might be followed by an outline of the activities of the Greeks as developed in the stories of the Iliad and Odyssey.

Other hero tales which might profitably be alternated with the Greek cycle are the Norse stories centering about the character of Siegfried. As the Greek cycle began in a myth, so also began the Norse stories. The Norse gods and goddesses represent also the religion of a great people and a knowledge of them is necessary to a complete understanding of the Siegfried legend. There is a ruggedness about the Norse heroes that makes a definite appeal to children of Norse parentage and it is advisable that these stories be pursued in Scandinavian communities in preference to the Greek cycle.

There are a number of other cycles that would repay the class and teacher

who consider them for study, but the material is not accessible in many rural schools. I refer to the Roland legends of France, the stories of the Cid in Spain, and the legends of Alexander the Great. Beowulf, an early English epic and the Kalavala might also be studied or selections used.

Not more than one of these cycles should be attempted in one year, since a thorough and interesting study might, with its correlations and ramifications, stretch over a period of two or three months. By that time the child is ready for something realistic or scientifically informative. Children should learn to like all types of material.

It is evident that very little can be accomplished in the study of hero tales in a period of fifteen minutes, the general class period in a rural school, but if four or five classes are working on the same material from different angles, according to their ability to proceed, the sum of those classes resulting in an hour's period of time will do much toward producing a unity of effect, purpose and subject matter in the consideration of any hero tale material.

None of this material need become monotonous since it lends itself to much variation. An occasional poem, such as "The Lotus Eaters," when discussing the Odyssey, a picture gallery of knights when working with King Arthur, a ballad when considering Robin Hood, lend variety to the day's discussion and type of recitation, and the fully-prepared teacher will make them a part of the lesson.

Heroes are born not made, and while our ancient heroes are still with us in the traditional material which has lived after them, so also are some of our modern heroes, in science, in medicine, in art, in literature. How easy is it therefore, to step from the romantic into the realistic field, from the hero tale to biography, from the past into the present.

Poetry Experiences of an Itinerant Teacher

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FOR four and one half years I was a book agent, a fact which in itself would hardly seem to present the proper credentials for a discussion of the teaching of poetry. It is a strange paradox that this particular group, variously known as publishers' representatives, educational salesmen, book men, and book agents, is at the same time an integral part of, and a non-participant in, the American program of education. But, whatever title he operates under, it is increasingly true that his contribution to education is that of an itinerant teacher, subject to the same degree of success or failure which any teacher finds proportionate to his own interests and ability.

If he happens to be interested in poetry, and more especially in the guidance of children's interests in poetry, he has a rare opportunity. For this is a subject which has just recently begun to feel the influence of investigations that long ago changed the course of the elementary curriculum.

I am speaking from contacts with both children and teachers when I say that it is very unfortunate that so natural a form of human experience can suffer the misunderstanding that poetry does in the elementary school.

It was not long after I first went "on the road" that I began to wonder if something couldn't be done. Walking through corridors to the monotonous beat of poems recited in concert, listening to individual children in "display" recitations of poems that exhibited nothing but the absence of poetry, looking at reams of artificial verses scattered among artificial posters as evidences of an active year of creative work—these were only

*Read before the meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English in Detroit, December 1, 1933.

the beginning. As the months went by it was increasingly evident that there was neither rhyme nor reason to the place that poetry was occupying in the elementary curriculum.

Here was something on a pedestal being worshipped with grimaces and reluctance. For some reason it had been endowed with divinity—nobody knew why. Max Eastman has said that "a poet in history is divine, but a poet in the next room is a joke." This appeared to be substantiated by the evidence as I had seen it. And so it was with pleasure that I collected the few contrasting bits of evidence that some teachers were trying to find a way out.

Here was a second grade teacher who was expanding the children's sense of rhythm by correlating poetry with music. Another second grade teacher was emphasizing the pictorial elements of poetry. And a fourth grade teacher had gone to the roots of poetry by developing the metaphorical speech of poetry. She called them comparisons, and she got poetry such as "The clock that stands in the hall is the master of the house." These were scattered bits of evidence. There was still nothing to point to an underlying program of objectives, nothing to indicate that poetry had been subjected to the same investigation as other phases of the elementary reading and language courses.

Before attempting to suggest such a program, it is necessary that you know what I mean by "poetry," and more especially what place I believe it should have in the elementary school. Poetry is larger than any definition of it; yet definitions are helpful instruments if we accept their limitations. The definition

most satisfactory to me is that given by Robert Frost, when he says that "a complete poem is made when an emotion has found its thought and the thought its words." Poetry starts in an emotion and completes its cycle when it has transmitted that emotion to the listener. It does this by means of words. Taken in its broadest sense, poetry is a way of looking at things, and a poem is the complete record of what was seen during that particular experience.

It seems to me that the elementary teacher can feel satisfied if she has developed an attitude in her classes that accepts poetry as a way of looking at things; and that she should *not* feel satisfied if her children have memorized even fifty poems without once coming in contact with poetry.

With a few indications that some teachers (and I am speaking of the rank and file of grade teachers) were attempting to bring poetry back to life, but with no indications that even these teachers had either a definite program or a place in a continuous program, I started to fit the pieces together. This would have been presumptuous, if it had not been for the opportunity to experiment in many classrooms and to gather the individual results of a variety of classroom experiments that already had been made.

It seemed necessary, first, to translate poetry into terms commensurate with the reactions of the elementary child. Accepting, for this purpose, the belief that all poetry is composed of the three elements, *sound*, *sense*, and *suggestion*, an effort was made to reduce these elements to their lowest common denominator. These three elements were reduced, therefore, to *rhythm*, *pictures*, and *meaning*.

The development of a child's interest in poetry must naturally reflect his ability to progress with the elements of poetry on increasing levels. His first interests are in the rhythm, meaning (action and surprise), and pictures of poetry. This is a recognized fact. But it is not so often recognized, or at least the fact is forgotten, that few children will become

increasingly sensitive to these elements of poetry unless they are given guidance. It seems to me that it is this lack of guidance that leaves children no closer to poetry, and usually less close, in the sixth grade than they were in the first. By giving them guidance along specific lines, I mean exposing them to the elements of poetry on increasing levels of difficulty. In this way we foster the growth of the child's appreciation within his capacity to respond with enjoyment.

The first grade teacher who presented Hilda Conkling's "Little Snail" for the element of action, and the fourth grade teacher who presented Sandburg's "Primer Lesson" were working in a continuous program—the first on a level with the interests and abilities of the primary child, the second on a level with the more mature group that is capable of reacting to the sense rather than the simple meaning of poetry. It is the progress from simple addition to the addition of fractions. These two pieces of poetry merely represent the difference between a simple idea (meaning translated into action) and a more subtle merging of sense and suggestion. Yet more often than not you will see a reverse order of presentation, in most schools.

Is it not possible to maintain an informal presentation of poetry, but to have a well formalized program underlying the course in poetry? I believe it is. With definite objectives, formulated in relation to the abilities, attitudes, interests, and understandings of elementary children it is possible to make a course of study in poetry that will be more than a list of required or suggested poems. It is possible to increase the child's appreciation by helping him to increase his capacity for appreciation—by selecting the poems on a basis of progress from the simple rhythm, picture, and meaning to the more inclusive elements of sound, sense and suggestion. This requires no more time in the classroom—but it does require a thoughtfully developed course of study and a teacher who has been awakened to the possibilities of this kind

of approach to poetry.

Guidance should take but a small part of the time. The particular poem so presented should be followed by as many others as there are situations for them. But there should be a purpose behind their selection.

A specific example of purposeful teaching of poetry is that of the fifth grade teacher who used the study of early America as a background for, and an introduction to, Indian poetry. She selected an "Indian Song for Fair Weather," introduced it with a discussion of the times when all poetry was read or chanted—but never written—back to the times when primitive men used poetry as prayers to their gods before going to battle, and before planting their crops. They chanted the poem, they danced it, they entered into the experience which it recorded. The comment from one of the children that "it made poetry mean something" is typical of the reactions.

And this brings me to the reason why I changed from the general textbook field to the publishing of books in the field of elementary English. Most children lack background for the poems that are presented to them, and most teachers fail to provide it. One of the reasons for this is lack of material adaptable to a continuous course in poetry. This is especially true of the primary grades.

For some time we have been working at the Press on a series of units that would provide both a background and motivation for poetry in the primary grades. Selecting fifty modern poems—and basing our selection on the objectives mentioned in the first part of this paper—we wove them into a running story of classroom experiences. We have attempted to provide supplementary reading that is at the same time basic material for the development of the child's appreciation of poetry. We are trying to help primary children become *readers* of poetry.

In other words, we are doing for primary children the same thing that the following situation did for children in a

sixth grade. Wishing to show that some things must be said in poetry, and realizing that poetry contrasted with prose is often its best demonstrator, I first provided a background by relating in prose the experience from which the poem came.

"One day last January, I was driving in a very lonely section of northern New England. It was a gray day; and there was a light snow falling. I was driving alone, and found little in the day itself to relieve a growing sense of loneliness. Perhaps I was more than usually aware of the desolation in that particular part of the country. I noticed that there were few houses along the road, and that many of them were sadly in need of repair. I could see very little land that might easily be cultivated—granite ledges, wooded mountains and pastures strewn with boulders—these were hardly conducive to cultivation.

"There was all about me the atmosphere of a wild, lonely country. That is, this country did little itself to encourage anyone to settle down and eke out an existence in the shadows of its granite mountains. I wondered why anyone ever came there to live in the first place, and why, after they came, they hung on and endured it.

"That night I stopped for supper in a little tavern. Several woodsmen were warming themselves in front of the fireplace. They were boasting of how many cords of wood they had 'set up' that day. After the others had their say, a youngster spoke up to tell how many cords of wood he had cut. 'You call yourself a woodsman, son?' one of the older men asked him. And the youngster replied, 'Well, no! But I can make a living at it, though!'

"There was the answer to my question, and I wasn't satisfied until later in the evening I had an opportunity to record the experience, in so far as I was able, in 'the best words in their best order.' "

And I read the children the verses that recounted my afternoon's experiences.

The Negro in Children's Literature

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WHEN I say HITTY you immediately think of Rachel Field; if I say Erick Kelly you think of THE TRUMPETER OF KRACKOW, and when I say Maxfield Parrish you think of those gorgeous blues and oranges with puffy white clouds or shining turreted castles which are so familiar to all lovers of vivid color. If, on the other hand, I should say GIRLS OF AFRICA, Langston Hughes, or GARRUM, THE HUNTER, of what would you think? Of anything? Does any clear-cut image rise to your mind's eye? Probably not! And yet each of these is a representative factor in Negro literature as important as any of the items mentioned in my opening sentence.

"Negro literature" is a blanket term used in this article to denote literature for Negroes, by Negroes and about Negroes. It is an all inclusive term since it admits authorship by members of the white or black races, and presupposes a reading membership of all. Surely, it is important for the American school child to know something about the literature of this black race which came to America a little over three hundred years ago, and has become an important and integral part of this nation.

For many years, the stories and songs of the Negro race have been sadly neglected in the literature of this country. As a child in the public schools of this city, I loved the stories of great Americans. When I began the study of literature, geography, and history, I was suddenly given a rude awakening as to the trite contributions made and recognized by the Negro race. It was in those days

*This paper was written during an extension course given by Miss Caroline J. Trommer, Assistant Professor, Department of Elementary Education, Teachers College of the City of Boston.

that I disliked very much to go to school. We read stories of every race's contribution to the development of literature but our own, and of every race's part in the laying of the bricks in its history but our own. Whenever I hinted that I wished to absent myself from these lessons my mother would say, "It isn't color, but *character* that counts. Every race has been enslaved, you silly little goose. Gold must be burned in a fiery furnace before it is refined; it is only when a race has suffered that its worth is found. Surely someone has written some stories of worth about them; go learn about your own people and be proud of your heritage." I went to school but did not find much to be proud of.

One Sunday when I was in the eighth grade I had the good fortune to hear a Negro speaker in a Boston Public Library lecture say "The final greatness of all peoples is the amount and standard of literature and art which they have produced." It was this statement which sent me adventuring in the realms of Negro literature, and it was a temporary teacher of German extraction who helped me to get the right perspective. It was in this grade I began building a Negro library and it was she who gave me my first book, UP FROM SLAVERY. She taught me to use the various departments of the Boston Public Library, for most of the Negro books were in the Special Library Department. As I look back, I know it was she who helped to strengthen within me "pride of race" which my mother was nurturing in our home. From this love of my own literature there grew a love for literature of all peoples (because I had to read for comparisons), that

world-mindness which is so highly desirable an asset!

Before we discuss the literature produced about and by the American Negro, let us take a journey to the land of his nativity and learn what literary background he had before he arrived and what is being produced in Africa today. The history of the great African continent was, until Stanley's time, a blank page. The black man could not read nor write. His rude carvings were done in wood, or rough paintings upon the rocks and upon the wall of his round hut. Some of these were placed upon the bark of the trees. A few symbolic patterns were woven into his mats. But although his history has not been thoroughly recorded (since he had no scribes) we find he has a very rich unwritten literature. Africa a b o u n d s in folk tales and adventure stories. They are probably closely akin to those of India in their wealth of imagery and variety of plot. While reading these folk stories, many of which have been collected and published, we get the impression that they are very old. They have been handed down by word of mouth for eons, long before the coming of Christianity and the days of Aesop.

In those parts of Africa to which Caucasian education has not reached, the folk tales are told today and will, no doubt, survive unchanged for many years. The art of story-telling still lives in Africa. We know that on this continent day ends almost with the setting sun, for there darkness treks very closely on the heels of twilight. The natives gather around a blazing fire. There is some subtle charm which casts an alluring spell upon the gathering, and there, in this kingdom of the night, surrounded by this eerie atmosphere, the story-teller relates his tales of Africa and the African Bush.

In WEST AFRICAN FOLK TALES by W. J. Barker, LITTLE WISE ONE by Frank Worthington, LITTLE BLACK STORIES FOR LITTLE WHITE CHILDREN by C. Blaise, and BLACK FOLK TALES by Erick Berry, you will find fascinating

folk stories as well as lovely illustrations. FOLK TALES OF AN AFRICAN SAVAGE by Lobagola will enchant you, for they are the tales related by the African storyteller while the tribe sat around the blazing fire.

Africa has long been called the "Dark Continent." Mr. and Mrs. Carl Ackley denounced that title and called their book IN BRIGHTEST AFRICA for they contended that Africa was full of adventure and rich in literary themes. We have ample proof of that statement in the adventure books for all ages written about the African jungle and its people. Probably the two persons who are doing the most to have the Caucasian race see that the African is not merely a black savage, incapable of leadership and judgment, are Herbert Best and his wife, Erick Berry. They are making a magnificent contribution to children's literature. In GARRUM, THE HUNTER, and GARRUM, THE CHIEF, and SON OF THE WHITE MAN, we find examples of inspiring leadership, quick thinking, admirable judgment, and whole-hearted sacrifice of self for the good of the tribe.

GARRUM, THE HUNTER, is a stirring and convincing piece of literature. It is a story which boys of twelve to fourteen years would enjoy. Garrum was a skillful hunter. Through kindness he trained his dog, and there was an uncanny understanding between dog and master. At heart Garrum was a nomad. We find him solving his problems, often very difficult ones, with courage and decision.

In GARRUM, THE CHIEF we again note his great physical courage, his wisdom and understanding. He was of royal blood in an African hill tribe. He understood the meaning of leadership. He could conceive and objectify situations. He used loneliness as a tonic. Boys of today could well emulate him because as a leader he had the welfare of the whole tribe at heart. Kindness, foresight, strength, firmness, decision, honesty, quietude, these are qualities which make for leadership whether the man be in a primitive African tribe, or in the midst

of a civilization such as ours.

GIRLS OF AFRICA, JUMA OF THE HILLS, MOM DU JOS (a story of a black doll) by Erick Berry, and delightfully illustrated by her, will create in the girls who read them tolerance for these black children.

A twelve year old girl writes about JUMA OF THE HILLS, "I liked the story because it revealed the fact that even though Juma was a girl of Africa, and didn't always have what she wanted, and most of the time needed very much, she proved to be a real girl. I think if the girl of today had more hardships to contend with, and took as her motto, 'It is not doing the thing I like to do, but liking the thing I have to do,' her life would be more blessed. She would then be a true 'Juma of the Hills.'"

But the Negro in his African setting and the Negro in his American setting constitute different pictures. Let us look at America just a little over three hundred years ago, to where a naked shivering group of captives stood upon the shores of Virginia—one year before the Pilgrims arrived at Plymouth in search of freedom. It is a far cry from that scene to the days of 1933! In spite of handicaps the race has learned many valuable lessons in its effort to adapt itself to American socializations. The lessons of home-life, labor, and religion were acquired in slavery. After emancipation, other lessons were learned from "The Yankee School Marm" who took up the task in the school rooms which her brothers had begun on the battlefield. It was in these rude schools that the Negro learned the history of America, of the deeds of her great men, the stirring events which marked her development, and the lofty ideals that had made America great.

In the colonial era a little slave girl, aged seven, was brought from Africa to America and sold in Boston to a Mr. John Wheatley, a wealthy gentleman. He purchased her as a servant for his wife. Mrs. Wheatley noted the girl's quick mind and determined to give her every opportunity. At seventeen, Phyllis

Wheatley published in London a volume of poems. Her poetry was the poetry of the eighteenth century. She wrote when Pope and Gray were transcendent, and her verse was full of classical and mythological allusions. She knew Ovid thoroughly and was familiar with other Latin scholars.

She probably knew Alexander Pope by heart. She wrote a poem to General Washington when he took command of troops at Cambridge, to George III when he repealed the Stamp Act, and also "To the University of Cambridge in New England." Brook Watson, Lord Mayor of London, gave her a copy of a magnificent folio edition of "Paradise Lost" now in the library at Harvard College. All in all, she wrote about prominent people in America and abroad. "Wasn't she 'ritzy' writing about all the royalty!" remarked a modern American girl. "Of course, she was reared in a wealthy home and she never knew the pangs of slavery."

Mr. Schomburg, the distinguished bibliophile of art and literature of the Negro, owns a book for Negro children published as early as 1828: THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF GUSTAVUS VASSA, THE AFRICAN from an account written by Vassa and abridged by A. Mott, published by Samuel Wood and Son. This book is important pedagogically because Mr. Mott planned it to motivate reading of parents as well as of the pupils of the African Free School of New York.

Later, the masters of the nineteenth century, Emerson, Whittier, Lowell, Whitman, Julia Ward Howe, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, all found the Negro a subject of interest. It was Mrs. Stowe's book, UNCLE TOM'S CABIN which so stirred the American people before the war. There is a new edition of the book with striking illustrations by James Daugherty which would capture the attention of any elementary school child.

Paul Lawrence Dunbar stands out as pre-eminently the first poet from the Negro race in the United States. He was the first to rise to a height from which he could get a panoramic view of his

own race. Dunbar's fame rests chiefly on his skill in presenting dialect, yet he has written some beautiful things in pure English. From *THE COMPLETE LIFE AND WORKS OF PAUL LAWRENCE DUNBAR* by Lydia K. Wiggin, the following poems are particularly suitable for children:

Ode to Ethiopia
The Spellin' Bee
Curiosity
Appreciation
Keep A-pluggin' Away
A Drowsy Day
Little Brown Baby
The Real Question
Two Little Boots
When Malindy Sings

The Negroes who were shipped from Africa to America naturally brought to the southern states their myths. It was Joel Chandler Harris who saved these for America in his delightful *UNCLE REMUS* books. These represent the greatest body of folk tales that America has produced. I read the *UNCLE REMUS* stories after I had read the African ones and I felt that when Joel Chandler Harris began to collect them many of the stories had lost much of their African simplicity and had been modified to suit the fauna of another continent. Under the stress of altered circumstances the Negroes had forgotten their native language and they were rapidly forgetting their tales. Uncle Remus lived over into the age of freedom and he amuses Sally's little boy with stories drawn from old plantation days. "Brer Fox" and "Brer Wolf" fall victims to the lucky and unscrupulous hero "Brer Rabbit." Almost every story in Joel Chandler Harris' book has a near relative in the African tales.

During the last decade, books and stories about the Negro child have begun to grow, because young Negro writers have few of those racial inhibitions which came directly after the Civil War when most Negroes wished to discard everything black because of slavery. So rich is the literary material imbedded in the life of the Negro that it has given im-

petus to many writers who are not themselves identified with the race, and we find them depicting a different type of Negro child and one more true to present day life. May all those who are entrusted with the selection of the best books for children believe that no child, black or white, should be deprived of the literature of his own race! "No race can ever become great which does not know and appreciate its own achievements."

In my character building period, I try to give my pupils one character about which their fathers or mothers know and which they might emulate. I do know that the Negro child in mixed schools in America has been at a tremendous disadvantage in having little or no recognized literature for the expression of "his highest ideals and aspirations and no channel through which the inner heart of his race might be known." In these schools Negro boys and girls have not been reading about heroic black warriors, statesmen, martyrs, or saints. Yet the progress of the world depends in general upon great men of all races! When my youngest sister was in the third grade, the teacher asked, "Whose birthday comes in February?" "Frederick Douglass!" shouted sister. The teacher stopped, startled, then said, "Tell us about him." The child began! She told the story of Frederick Douglass, Negro orator, born February 17, 1809; how he escaped from slavery, and did much for the anti-slavery cause. And the teacher listened with sympathy. Her understanding and insight caused one little Negro child to race home beaming, because she had been able to tell this story about her race!

There is a story told of a white woman who came into a school in one of the large northern cities where there were a great many colored boys and said, "Boys, let me tell you the story of a real boy." As quick as a wink, one little black boy spoke up and said, "Miss, if it's about a black boy, all right, but if it's about a white boy, I don't want to hear it, because I can read about them

any time in my books." What he wanted was to hear something about the achievements of his own race. Evidently, he had been given a knowledge of the other fellow's achievements and progress and when he tried to emulate them he found it was like the slipper which Cinderella's sisters tried on—it didn't fit. The Negro child should be told of the achievements of members of *his* race along with the lives of Washington, Lincoln, Jefferson. He should be given contemporaries of these to look up while the white child is looking up his, and in that way, sympathetic understanding could be attained. This procedure will make the Negro child strive to lift his race to higher levels, and the white child feel that the Negro race has played its part in the making of America.

Hawthorne in his story of "The Great Stone Face" gives us the picture of a boy developing under the influence of a high ideal. This story is an incentive to seek that which is noble. All my life, and especially since I began to delve into Negro literature, I have kept before me, not a great stone face, but an ebony one, that of a woman. She was an ideal because of her courage and foresight. She was, to me, an Ann Hutchinson, a Barbara Frietchie, a Mollie Pitcher, a pioneer. I heard about her when I was a little child. When I was eleven, I had the good fortune to speak and shake hands with her. For a week afterward, I used cold cream on my hand lest water wash off the touch of her greeting, and I boastfully and dramatically told my classmates how this great woman had shaken my hand! I thrilled every time I re-acted the scene! I declared that I was going to write a book about her some day when I grew up. But, as I grew older, my self-assurance began to dwindle; yet the gods smiled and inspired a real writer to create that book! She says in her preface just exactly what I would have said, and she puts into her book all the courage which I would have wished to

portray, and she has presented such a tenderly sympathetic piece of work, such real literature, that fervently and reverently, remembering Harriet Tubman, I cry "Allelujah! Amen!" I speak of Mrs. Swift's book *THE RAILROAD TO FREEDOM*, a story based on authentic history and a masterful narrative describing Harriet Tubman's escape from slavery.

Harriet Tubman associated with men like Whittier, Parker, Emerson, and Seward. Though she never learned to sign her name, her name is printed in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and the town of Auburn, New York, has placed a bronze tablet in the Court House to her memory. The Vanderbilts were builders of railroads, but Harriet Tubman was a conductor on another kind of railway, the underground railroad. She piloted river boats in the South, served as a spy, nurse, and soldier in the ranks, and until her death in 1913, she was an ardent worker in all movements for the uplift of mankind.

Negro parents in the North are beginning to realize that because their children do not receive their literature in school they themselves must needs give it to them. Therefore, there is in Boston a memorial library named for a colored woman who was principal of a Cambridge School, Maria L. Baldwin, devoted entirely to Negro literature. Here, study classes for Negro children are held. The children of the intermediate, junior, and senior high school read books by both white and colored authors having Negro themes. The club offers every year prizes in gold for the best essays and book reviews on selected Negro biographies and books.

America has held her welcoming arms wide open to the oppressed and the weary of all nations and all races. She has offered them a home. But a real home is founded upon peace, and love, and co-operation, and these three come only when there is complete understanding and sympathy.

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Motivating Interest in Recreative Reading

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THE common practice of book presentations, or book reviewing, in the classroom recalls long, tedious enumeration of one incident after another, until the thread of the story has been lost in a maze of details, and one thing is certain in the minds of the listeners—the resolve never to read such a tiresome, tedious book. Let us change our concept of the term “book reviewing” to one that includes a presentation not over two or three minutes long, a presentation full of surprises, one that will make the listeners hungry for more, not surfeited to the point where even the name of the book becomes distasteful.

Book reviewing is an art of high order. It requires discrimination, judgment, a sense of proportion, and above all things—brevity. Rather than have a child attempt to tell the whole book, it is better to teach him to give the name of the book, the author, two or three sentences telling what the book is about, and then to present some portion that he has found particularly interesting in the way that best suits the part selected.

Incidents

Almost all children's books abound in memorable incidents—the Ruggles family's preparation to go to the Christmas party in *THE BIRD'S CHRISTMAS CAROL*, Dr. Doolittle's plan to get the hermit out of prison in *THE VOYAGES OF DR. DOOLITTLE*, the painting of the fence in *THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER*, or Alice's visit to the Mock Turtle in *ALICE IN WONDERLAND*. It is a good plan for the reviewer to select an illustrative incident, one that will make others want to read the book that he has enjoyed, and one that will best typify the book that he is trying to “sell” to his audience,

and confine himself to it. This sixth grade boy has these things in mind as he tells the following incident:

The book from which I am taking this incident is *THE ANCIENT EAST AND ITS STORY* by James Baikie. The story begins with the earliest dawn of civilization and reaches to that period when Greece and Persia faced each other for the control of the Ancient World. The book includes many interesting incidents, one of which I shall tell:

“Many Egyptians of the early days tried to extend their master's empire farther south where the precious woods and fine ivory came from, trying to press beyond the known regions. But one day the little eight-year old Pharaoh of Egypt received a letter from his baron Herkhuf containing news that made him more excited than anything that had ever come into his life. The message stated that the faithful baron had penetrated into central Africa and was bringing the Pharaoh a little pygmy man. The little ruler quickly dispatched a letter giving directions for the care of the pygmy. He was fearful lest the little man fall into the water for the instructions stated that when the pygmy went on board the ship guards should be placed on either side of him. At night trustworthy people were to sleep beside him and inspect him at least ten times each night. We shall have to imagine how the little pygmy appreciated being awakened numerous times each night to give information about his health, and whether he liked the rich living at the Pharaoh's palace. This is only one of the interesting incidents in the 470 pages of this book.

The Unfinished Incident

The unfinished incident, breaking off in an exciting place, appeals to human curiosity, and action springs out of that which one earnestly desires to know. No amount of arguing or persuading might induce a girl or boy to read a certain book, but let some one tell:

Araminta and her brother John were bumping along the road in a little two-wheeled cart drawn by their pony Velvet Eyes. It was Araminta's birthday and true to custom she was being entertained by the family on a picnic. Her mother and father were riding on horseback just ahead. Suddenly Velvet Eyes jumped to one side of the road. Araminta and John looked just in time to see a man's head appearing over the top of the wall by the side of the road, and more quickly disappearing. This astonished both Araminta and John, but they were not frightened. "Perhaps he was asleep," Araminta said, but John did not agree, because he had seen how the man pulled his hat over his face. They jogged along to Araminta's favorite spot—a little brown house beside lilac bushes. But there was something different about the house today. As they passed it, Araminta heard a faint cry. It came again and again."

Immediately those who have not read the book want to know what the noise was. Did the man hiding behind the wall have anything to do with the faint cry? After the reader finishes the chapter, and finds that the faint cry came from a baby, does he cast the book aside? The chances are that he will not, and the reason is clear: another question has arisen; what did they do with the baby? Probably by this time, too, the child wants to know who Araminta and the family are, and how they happen to be living in this interesting part of the country; so he goes back to the beginning chapter. Finally, he wants to know how everything ends, and he reads on to the last chapter.

Characterizations

Characterization in book presentations has a double appeal: it appeals to the dramatic in children, and it gives the child who is representing a character in a book a key position. He is portraying a character, and no one else knows who he is. He is in possession of a secret, and he must take advantage of his strategic position by telling enough to throw some light on the character, yet he must not allow his character to be too easily guessed by over telling.

This requires careful selection of ma-

terials, sensitiveness in the choice of words, discrimination in choosing qualities of character as determined by significant details, and watchful attention to the arrangement of sentences. A child grows in the ability to leave out incidents which do not throw light on the kind of a person his character is.

The sixth grade boy who assumes the position of a dog, standing on its hind legs with front paws bent forward, has the group guessing. Who is he? There is the possibility of his being Petrasche, Ladd, Tim Towser, Baldy, Rowdy, Pep, or many other well-known dogs. But as the narrator proceeds, the outline of one of these dogs begins to emerge:

I am a cross between a Saint Bernard and a shepherd. I am brownish-red in color, with a white breast, and a white streak, which begins at the tip of my nose and disappears between my ears. When the story begins, I have a kind, benevolent face, trusting eyes, a friendly manner, and my whole attitude is that of a county gentleman. My master is a very kindly man, and my home is in a beautiful section of the country where sunshine and flowers are abundant. But suddenly everything is changed for me. I am taken to a cold, bleak country where life is hard, where masters are both cruel and kind, and where I have to fight to live. You will see me henceforth battling with cold, hunger, overwork; fighting with my companions, struggling to become the leader of a dog team; and, finally, hesitating between the inviting call of the wolf and the love for a kind master. Who am I, and from what book do I come?

As the narrator proceeds, one by one, the dogs fade from the picture—the little fox terrier, Tim Towser, with his pointed nose that was always getting into mischief; the friendly Rowdy; the self-contained, retiring Baldy, while Buck in *THE CALL OF THE WILD* is left occupying the center of the picture.

Dramatization

The dramatic method needs no argument in its defense either from the viewpoint of participants or audience. Dramatization embodies the wish-fulfillment motive in reading. A child will not be able to have all the experiences of Ernest

the Policeman, of Hitty, of Peter Pan, or of Tom Sawyer, but wishes are given wings when the child enters into, and relives the experiences of these characters through his voice, muscles, and emotions. As one reads, he is continually dramatizing the story in his own person. He is Robin Hood, robbing rich priests and nobles, but aiding the poor and lowly; he is faring forth with Don Quixote, mounted on his steed in quest of entertaining adventure; he is impersonating David Copperfield in his childhood troubles, in his experiences with the debtor's prison, and in his final successes.

Children soon acquire skill in selecting incidents that have definite action and that are fairly complete, in improvising lines when necessary, in selecting characters, and in doing all the preliminary work incident to presentation. A teacher who will allow children freedom enough to give play to their initiative will soon find that they are amply able to manage dramatizations by themselves, as is shown in the following presentation by a fourth grade girl and boy:

JEAN IS THE MISTRESS

We wish to introduce you to *THE SCOTCH TWINS* by Lucy Fitch Perkins. The book tells many interesting things about the life of Jean and Jack. They have no mother; therefore Jean is the boss of the house, as you will see in this dramatization:

JEAN: (busily dressing, while Jack lies in his bed): Wake up, you lazy laddie, or when I get my clothes on I'll waken you with a wet cloth! Here's the sun looking in at the window to shame you, and Father already gone to the milking.

JACK: (opening one eye lazily): Leave us alone, now, Jeanie, I was just having a sonsie wee bit of a dream. Let me finish, and syne I'll tell you about it.

JEAN: Indeed, and you'll do nothing of the kind. Up with you, mannie, or I'll be dressed before you, and I ken very well you'd not like to be beaten by a lassie, and her your own sister, too. (Jack cuddles down farther in the blankets.)

JACK: Aye, she's putting on her Saturday face. There's trouble brewing, I doubt! It'll be Jack this and Jack that, both but and ben, all day long, and whatever is the use of

this tirley-wirly I can't see, when on Monday the house will look as if it had never seen sight of a besom! I'll just bide where I am. (Closes his eyes and pretends to be asleep.)

JEAN: Jack! You can't sleep in this day. Get up. (She gets some water in a dipper.) Jack, I'm telling you! Don't ever say I didn't. If you don't stir yourself before I count five, you'll be sorry. One, two three, four—(Jack does not move.)—five! (She pours the water on Jack's head.)

A dramatized incident from a book may at times be presented through a puppet show. The children make their own puppets according to their ideas of the characters, they design and construct the stage and scenery, make their dialogue, and finally interpret these lines through the puppets. The puppet show lends itself admirably to complete self-expression, it gives the audience a charming peep into the book, and is an excellent method of arousing interest.

Illustrations

To the child who is facile with pencil and crayon, another method of presenting a favorite episode in a book is through illustrations. Presenting impressions through drawing is one of the earliest forms of childish expression. As soon as the child becomes familiar with Mother Goose, his fingers express his impressions through rhythm and art. As he grows older and reads more advanced books, he needs the opportunity to continue this form of expression.

An incident that has considerable action may be expressed on a book roll, which may be made from ordinary butcher paper about two feet wide and three or four yards long according to the amount of illustrating, and unrolled as the child tells his story. In order to select the most outstanding incidents, one reviews mentally the complete story, and then makes his selection of interesting incidents. Through this selecting process, he is learning to judge, to organize, and to choose incidents that have action and illustrative possibilities. Librarians state that certain books are greatly in demand after children have illustrated episodes.

Making book jackets for favorite books is a popular method of illustrating. Book jackets follow the current practice of publishing companies in providing for covers which help keep the book clean, and which, attractively illustrated, aid in selling the book. After the child reads the book, he represents on his cover in crayolas, cut-out work, or paints, a scene which best characterizes the book. He must be careful to use his own ideas, not those already used by the illustrator.

The little boy whose book cover shows an ocean scene with a small boat nearing a tropical shore has this to say about it:

I have made a cover for the book *ERNEST THE POLICEMAN* by S. C. Beaman. The story is about the adventure of Ernest the Policeman with some characters called "The Scum of Toytown." I have taken the scene for my illustration from an incident which I thought very exciting.

Captain Brass has just been thrown off his ship by his mates into an old boat. One morning, as he awoke, he saw land in the distance. He seized a piece of wood which was lying loose in the bottom of the boat, and using it for an oar, he paddled toward the island. On the island he saw many queer looking men coming slowly toward him. Of course, he was captured, but as you might expect, he was rescued by Ernest the Policeman, who put all his enemies in jail. The part I have illustrated is Captain Brass making for the shore.

Miniature settings, also in the class of illustrations, appeal to the desire to construct things. Imagination and judgment are necessary in deciding on the setting that is most significant, and the construction may include anything from the aeroplane and ice regions in *SKYWARD* to the Swiss home and flower covered mountains in *HEIDI*.

The sixth grade boy who made a setting of *GAO OF THE IVORY COAST* tells about it in this way:

GAO OF THE IVORY COAST by Katy Seabrook is an interesting story of the life of a native named Gao. He has many exciting experiences with lions, tigers, and other fierce animals. My setting shows Gao killing one of the biggest tigers that he has ever seen. Some circus people had captured several tigers, and

had confined them in a large cage, but the cage broke, and the largest tiger escaped. He went through villages doing a great deal of damage, and finally came to the house where Gao lived. Gao and his companions were weaving a rug when Gao saw the tiger ready to spring upon them. He seized a spear, and killed the tiger in time to save his companions. This is only one of the exciting incidents.

Conclusion

Masks of characters, models from useful arts books, and costuming are reminders that worthwhile methods of book presentations might be continued indefinitely, and so long as children read with minds alert, they will think of new ways of presenting their books.

Resourcefulness and variety in the presentation of books is apt to prevent a lazy attitude in reading. Children often read with an inactive, inert attitude similar to that in which they approach their beds at night. Reading under these conditions becomes a passive exercise. If the reader has in mind the presentation his book, he forms the habit of alert reading; he is active, purposeful, expeditious, collaborating with the author. Here is an incident which might be dramatized, here is an exciting part which will make others want to read the book, or here is a chapter of interesting episodes which might be illustrated. If children are lead to experience the possibilities of a variety of ways of presenting their books, one frequently hears such planning as, "I have found an incident in *ROWDY* that will make a keen puppet show." The boy who has just finished *THE ANCIENT EAST AND ITS STORY*, whispers that he has chosen to represent the character, King Tutankhamen. A sixth grade girl surprises the group by making her presentation of *MARIO'S CASTLE* in poetry. The very fact that a child will be asked questions about his book and about his presentation, and his pride in being an authority, are stimuli for more careful, alert reading. All of which contributes to the one big objective, that of making permanent, desirable reading interests and habits.

Creative Editing*

GEORGE F. PIERROT

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CHRISTMAS is coming. All of you are thinking about Christmas presents. No doubt, somewhere on your list, is a boy of sixteen. Perhaps he lives in California, or Florida, or Maine. Perhaps, indeed, you have never seen him. You know, however, that he likes to read. So, you intend to buy him a book. But *what* book? What shall you give this stranger that will surely please him?

Your quandary is our quandary, as editors of THE AMERICAN BOY-YOUTH'S COMPANION. Each month we must print 65,000 words, or one and one-quarter book lengths. These words must interest 265,000 boys—boys we have never seen, boys whose names we have never heard. We *must* please these boys, if we are to stay in existence, for there is, in the magazine world, a very terrible god who demands ceaseless propitiation. The name of this god is "Renewal Percentages." A certain high proportion of each year's subscribers must send us new checks at Christmas, or else we must close our offices, write home for money, and set ourselves to planting the faster growing vegetables.

You will excuse me if, in citing examples, I make frequent mention of THE AMERICAN BOY. It is the magazine most familiar to me. Please remember, however, that my examples will be largely typical of the junior field. The average AMERICAN BOY reader, I may say in preface, is fifteen and a half years old. He is five feet four inches tall, he is finishing his sophomore year in high school, and he weighs 114 pounds. Such is the alert, critical young man who, like the gentleman in the oldtime song, "wants what he wants when he wants it."

*Address before The National Council of Teachers of English, Hotel Statler, Detroit, Dec. 1, 1933.

Most people think of an editor as a passive creature. He is a man (they think) who sits in a swivel chair and watches manuscripts pass him in a steady stream. Now and then he dips a languid finger into the stream, extracts a likely manuscript, buys it, and goes home knowing that the next month's issue is complete.

But editing — good editing — isn't so simple. Good editing is essentially creative. It calls for all the originality, all the enthusiasm and resourcefulness and educative knowledge and idealism, that a man can muster. I think it is fair to say that no really conscientious editor is really proud of more than about fifteen per cent of what he publishes. If you want to know why, buy his magazine and read the other eighty-five per cent! Fifteen per cent comes up to his exacting standard. The rest he publishes because he hasn't been able to find something better.

If you give thought to the painting of the Old Masters—let us take Peter Paul Rubens, for example—you will recall that *design* was the artist's first and foremost job. Rubens would plan his subject matter, his various elements, his color effects. He would work out, in his mind or on paper, a synthesis of complicated elements — character, background, idea, color scheme. Then, with crayon, he would put the finished composition on canvas. Such was *design*, the master plan of the master artist. After that, he might call in his aptest pupils to execute much of the detail. He himself would apply the last minute changes, the finishing touches. The result would be a Rubens masterpiece.

The really creative editor entrusts to nobody the responsibility for design. Each issue of a boys' magazine is like a com-

plicated canvas. It must be complete and well rounded. It must contain adventure, science, mystery, pictures, information, inspiration. It must contain these, and a hundred other elements, in reasonably correct proportion—not too much of one, not too little of another. After the design is complete, the editor proceeds to execute it.

He may send a staff writer to California to watch Georgia play U. S. C. He may send another staff writer to Warm Springs, to ask President Roosevelt for a New Year's greeting to boys. He may confer, himself, with an outstanding librarian, to get a practical slant on a new school of boys' literature. He may ask his editorial writer to read a dozen new publications from the American Editorial Association, in order to write a single one-paragraph editorial of advice to boys on the all-important subject of health.

Perhaps this is the day to send a questionnaire to 500 English teachers, asking them what sort of essay contest would be most useful in their classes. Perhaps this is the day when some illustrator in New York must be disciplined for too lavish use of revolvers in his drawings. Perhaps the head of an American Legion Post, in Southern Illinois, must be told, at length, why *THE AMERICAN BOY* must refuse to conduct a campaign for longer guns and fatter battalions. A day in the office of a boys' magazine is busy, pulsating, loaded with chances for error, teeming with opportunity for constructive service.

Consider, for a moment, the steps in the evolution of junior literature. In 1880, a certain young man with an incurable inferiority complex was glutting the market with stories in which a poor boy rode the brake beams to New York, rescued the daughter of a Wall Street magnate from the back of a runaway horse, was taken into her father's "counting house," and subsequently attained to wealth, position, and more or less happiness in the constant company of the young lady herself. I need not tell you

that the name of this optimistic young man was Horatio Alger.

Now the trouble with Horatio Alger, and with the entire dime novel school of literature, was not its viciousness. By and large, this literature wasn't vicious at all. Indeed, it was the very opposite. It was saccharine, sticky sweet. The heroes were always manly, hard muscled, the soul of honor. They spoke copy book English. They were as truthful as George Washington, except that they never stooped to such perverse activities as war against cherry trees. Success always smiled on them. They triumphed early, easily, and they lived long.

Our indictment of such literature is that it vitiated the minds of its readers. It wasted their time. It crowded out the more robust literature, which, unfortunately, was much less accessible. It gave boys none of the flesh and blood of life. It filled them with false ideas of what was in store for them. It was literary fat, not literary muscle.

The Alger school was followed by other schools. Some of them were better, but not much. Oliver Optic was an improvement, in that his boys faced realer problems. But his work was far from literature. His characterization was none too convincing, and life as he pictured it was scarcely a preparation for life as it would have to be lived.

Henty brought to popularity the historical novel for boys. It may be said for Henty that he fired millions with more of a tolerance for classroom history. But Henty's characters were storybook people, speaking in storybook language. America's Kirk Monro, who followed him, was again an improvement. He made American history real, and he made it popular. But Kirk Monro, too, was a tale-spinner, rather than a creator of literature.

Now, because my time grows short, let us jump to the present-day literature for boys and girls. You find, today, that junior books represent a very large percentage of the total output. You find that in the last fifteen years the junior

field has drawn to itself some of the most brilliant men and women in the book publishing field. You find that many of the finest adult writers have found attraction in writing for young people. You find that some of the world's leading artists—men and women of more than ephemeral talent—have turned to the junior field.

Let us examine, for a minute, the current schedule of *THE AMERICAN BOY*. Let us see wherein we differ, in our present-day ideas of what is proper reading, from the Horatio Alger tradition.

Consider, for example, our current serial, "Larry Marsh, Packer." This is an excellent illustration of what we call "motivated fiction." Motivated fiction attempts to give as much accurate information as does really creative non-fiction, but to sugar-coat it in the form of the all-important "good story."

We wanted to present to our readers, a picture of present-day fishing industry as it actually lives and breathes. We wanted to show every process, from the catching of the fish through the canning of them to their actual sale over the retail counter. We wanted to present each stage fully, correctly, and interestingly. So we sent William Heyliger, author of *HIGH BENTON* and one of the best writers in the older-boy field, to Maine to spend several months in the sardine packing district. He chatted with fishermen. He went through packing houses, guided by co-operative foremen. He consulted brokers, he did some fishing on his own account, he haunted warehouses, he talked with chain store retailers. He even stuffed his pockets with soda crackers, and sampled enough sardines to make him hate them for the rest of his life.

The result was "Larry Marsh, Packer." It features a real boy, real industry, real life. An *AMERICAN BOY* reader who finishes this story will be most enthusiastic over its entertainment value. What will be less apparent to him, but even more important, in our opinion, is the fact

that, for the first time in his life, he has formed some definite and positive and tenable ideas about business and industry.

William Heyliger is but one of many examples. Frederic Nelson Litten is just back from Haiti, where he gathered, for *AMERICAN BOY* readers, accurate and colorful information about American fliers in the tropics. His work is appearing in the form of fiction, which increases its appeal, but it is none the less wholesome and educational.

We sent T. S. Stribling, Pulitzer prize novelist, to South America to get us new, accurate, true-to-life fiction. We sent Warren Hastings Miller to the Malay Peninsula and to the Sahara. Each year James Willard Schultz, last of the plainsmen-writers, gives us a story that is not only good fiction, well written, but which is history in motion.

Edward J. O'Brien, the man who annually picks the world's greatest short stories, always honors a surprisingly large quota of *AMERICAN BOY* fiction, in competition with that of the best adult magazines. He does this, I suspect, because we never have subscribed to the now rapidly disappearing doctrine that "anything is good enough for a boy." We have replaced it with the newer, finer doctrine that "a boy's mentality is entitled to respect."

We hold that no writing is too good for boys. We hold that a boys' magazine, to be a truly worthwhile force, must exemplify good diction, good writing, good punctuation. It must uphold quality standards. It must have a respect for style, for literary integrity.

On the average, we keep our readers three and a half years. After that they yield to a most deplorable habit—they grow into adult magazines. But we keep them long enough so to accustom them to good drawing and real, substantial literature that when they leave us, they will be content with nothing less.

That, we feel, is the length and breadth of our job.

Developing the Encyclopedia Habit

VELMA WOOD

Librarian, Sherrill School

Detroit, Michigan

CHILDREN are not interested in learning how to use the encyclopedia until they have a definite personal need for it. This is an attempt to solve the problem of teaching the use of the encyclopedia and developing the encyclopedia habit.

To present a formal lesson to the whole class when no child has a specific need for it will result more or less in failure. At best it is illogical to assume that forty children will want to know at the same time how to use the encyclopedia. One of the first methods was to require each group of six or eight children to do the encyclopedia lessons. This procedure has never made the librarian popular, nor preserved the library setting and atmosphere which has been developed. When lessons are handed out moans are heard immediately. One child will ask, "Do we have to do this?" Another will state, "I wish I could read my book." The library is primarily a place for one to enjoy himself and move about with a quiet freedom which perhaps cannot be permitted in the classrooms.

Of course the library in every day life is not purely for pleasure or recreational reading. We realize that another big reason for its existence is that of reference. The child must first learn that any question which arises at home or at school may be answered in the library. It is most important to teach him how to use the library tools, particularly the encyclopedia. The children need to be aroused to the point where they will voluntarily search or ask for information on a subject in which they are interested.

To arouse interest and create a need for using the encyclopedia a number of ques-

tions were prepared, of which the following are typical.

1. Do you know whether shooting stars ever reach the earth? See encyclopedia.
2. Do you know why icebergs are dangerous? See encyclopedia.
3. Do you know which is heavier, ice or water? See encyclopedia.
4. Do you know why silver is used to make surgical instruments? See encyclopedia.
5. Do you know why canaries are kept in coal mines? See encyclopedia.
6. Do you know how many tones the average singer can sing? See encyclopedia.
7. Do you know what children first heard the story of "Cinderella?" See encyclopedia.

Over sixty questions which might attract attention were printed, each on a suitable paper about twelve by six inches. Some were sent to the science, literature and upper home rooms where they were posted. A schedule was kept and every two or three weeks the questions were moved from one room to another. The moving kept them alive and gave added interest. Two or three were also kept in the library. Incidentally, the art and music teachers requested some of the "little posters" for their rooms.

The children have responded enthusiastically. Classes voluntarily, without further stimulation, sought for information on these questions. Their interest culminated in the use of this material as a basis for topics in their auditorium club work.

After an intense interest in "hailstorms," "lighthouses," and "shooting stars," for instance, and after he has been shown how to find what he wants, a child will never forget how to use the

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Editorial

Stones for Bread

THE FORCES that constantly turn thought in the direction of profit-making in business — and what great agencies are not being set up now for that purpose?—are all too frequently creating a wide-spread indifference to the necessity of public school education. Dr. Charles H. Judd of the University of Chicago sounded the alarm last spring of a conspiracy, organized and powerful, to shatter the structure of public school education. More threatening, however, and more insidious still are the forces that shift the attention of the American public away from the true facts concerning the desperate plight of public schools in many communities. It must be the duty of social minded persons to shuttle some of the attention of the public back to educational matters, for not within a century have the perils to elementary schools been more threatening than today.

There is a ruthlessness in the hard quality of business recovery that would exact a profit at the cost of curtailment of public education, or that even creates doubt with the apparent intention of undermining the pleas that are being made to keep the school open. Throughout the country, satisfaction is being expressed at the Christmas trade; there is gratification that men are returning to work and are spending their earnings on merchandise; and at the same time, in many instances, there is

suspicion, hostility even, toward expenditures for public education. In one state, for example, a plea for money to relieve the desperate plight of the schools was met with charges that there was much duplication of expenditures and financial waste in public education.

Teachers everywhere, educators the country over, all people concerned with the constructive forces of society need to get into this struggle for recovery with more unselfishness of thought. Somehow the "taxpaying public" must be made to envisage ten years from now the men and women who are today the boys and girls in the upper grades. What a picture of ignorance! What a beggared society will that be, if public education is shattered!

Such insidious attacks upon public education are peculiarly ironical, coming, as they do, at the Christmas season — the children's own holiday. Together with satisfaction that people are buying toys and sweets for the holidays, is disapproval of the provision of education for the very recipients of the candy and playthings. A poor Christmas indeed when children may have gee-gaws but not schools!

When business, in its scrimmage for recovery, begins to be forgetful of the boys and girls of the country, just then is the time for the voice of the educator to be heard in resounding alarm.



Reviews and Abstracts

GRAMMAR AND USAGE IN TEXTBOOKS ON ENGLISH. Robert C. Pooley. University of Wisconsin Bureau of Educational Research, Bulletin Number 14, August, 1933. 172 pp.

No branch of instruction in English has reposed more securely upon the traditions of the past than language, together with its corollary, prescriptive grammar. To affirm that such a condition results from ignorance and misinformation on the part of teachers of the subject, and more especially the authors of its textbooks, is likely to imply temerity or fearlessness of a high order. It has taken us long to realize that a comprehensive knowledge of our English tongue is possible only through advanced study, through study of a type that is, unfortunately, most frequently avoided by advanced students in our colleges. The reasons and the results arise from the same conditions: we still rely upon the precepts of a past era; we cheerfully master the "established rules" and the "facts"; and then we conspire to complete the vicious circle by ignoring the research of language scholars, who declare the principles of continuous change, and who formulate new practices upon the tenets revealed by their study. As long as such conditions hold, we shall continue to waste inestimable sums of public money and untold reserves of energy and patience, while the language goes its own inevitable way in spite of all our effort.

And yet the ways of reason are simple enough. Why should we not trust our scholars? Surely their motives are above suspicion. None pursue the difficult course of innovation for idle ends. On the other hand, their researches provide us with ample resources of information for the guidance of intelligent classroom practice. The present example should receive the consideration of every teacher of the language, the study by Robert C. Pooley of the University of Wisconsin. This notable work presents the essential background of the entire usage controversy, including its historical aspects, its present status, and many of the specific details of usage as they continue to be mis-handled by our too conservative modern texts.

In Chapter II, Professor Pooley traces the very interesting history of the "prescriptive idea" of

grammar from the sixteenth century, through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (the so-called era of "the grammarians"), to the rise of the new conflict occasioned by the development of a scientific, objective method of language investigation.

Chapter III contrasts several of our contemporary theories of correctness: those which still continue to dominate our language and grammar texts; those based upon the persistent, though mistaken opinions of a large non-academic group, which, incidentally, like most other forms of ignorance, have provided a lucrative field of commercial exploitation; and finally the new theory of language as "a living, growing organism, having its origin in the need of mankind to communicate thoughts and ideas, and having validity only insofar as it continues to serve this need."

The following chapters of the study consider some of the specific items of usage which have occasioned frequent controversies between laymen and scholars, and which, when measured according to the actual practices of cultured people, the texts examined continue to misrepresent. The chief values of these specific treatments appear, perhaps, to be somewhat incidental—that is, they emerge above the original purposes of the study, the simple appraisal of the texts in point of validity; they consist in the specific information that is provided concerning the usages themselves. They are, in fact, the pronouncements of the scholar in accordance with the results of scientific linguistic research.

To the teacher of the language, then, Professor Pooley's monograph will serve as a handbook, after the illustrious example, perhaps, of J. Lesslie Hall, of George Oliver Curme, and of Sterling Andrus Leonard. Incidentally, it should foster a critical attitude toward our too conservative texts, with possible salutary results. Textbooks, it must be remembered, are usually written to please the teachers who must use them—at least those that find a publisher are; and consequently, advancement in language instruction is not likely to progress very far beyond the enlightenment of the teachers for whom the texts are written. It is the scholar, speaking upon the authority of his re-

search, who must point the way. To this end Professor Pooley's study is respectfully recommended.

Fred A. Walcott,
University High School,
Ann Arbor, Michigan

MARTY AND COMPANY On a Carolina Farm.
Rose B. Knox. Illustrated by Eugene Iverd.
Doubleday, Doran, 1933. \$1.75.

In MARTY, Miss Knox has written a pleasantly realistic story of contemporary life on a Southern farm. Miss Knox's little girls are distinct personalities, and earnest, serious little Marty is as much alive as her predecessors, Miss Jimmy Dean and the rest. Besides Marty and her family the story concerns Otto, an amiable vagabond, Josepha, Marty's prize-winning hen, Red Rover, a blooded pig that is the pride of Marty's brother, Guy, and Dodger, a pony.

A distinctive feature of the book is the humor and understanding with which Miss Knox writes

of the farm animals. For example, there is the incident of Josepha's foster-mother, Pepper, who leaves her nest in a huff. Her maternal instinct does not assert itself until she spies Josepha, her one tiny chick. Thereupon Pepper sets about to gather herself a family, going from one flock to another, cutting out a chick here and a duckling there until she hovers a sampling of nearly everything in the poultry yard.

It was the animals that reestablished the Dixon family in the old homestead. The story is broad in its social implications, for it shows the efforts of the 4-H clubs to interest young people in fine stock, the effects of the depression on farm life, and the various agricultural and domestic problems that crowd into Marty's consciousness.

It is obvious from all this that the book is rich in values. The one question remaining before the reviewer is, will children like it? I think they will.

C. C. C.

POETRY EXPERIENCES OF AN ITINERANT TEACHER

(Continued from page 248)

CHALLENGE

Among the spruce-propped hills I drove one
day

In January—hills of granite, thrust
Against a granite sky to strike a dust
That fell like snow, yet gray—and all the way
I looked on shanties tumbled in decay.
Nor could I answer what intrinsic trust
First brought the settlers to these hills, what
gust
Of withered wind had whispered them to stay.

That night I listened to the bragging talk
Of tired men, come down from hills to thaw
Before the tavern grate—and heard one mock

A youngster's boast of skill with ax and saw.
"You call yourself a woodsmen, son?" "Well,
no!

"But I can make a living at it, though."

These two accounts of an experience serve merely to show the need for saying some things in poetry.

In summary, I wish to present three conclusions of an itinerant teacher. First, that poetry needs to be removed from its pedestal; second, that it is necessary to construct a definite course of guidance; and third, that children must experience poetry in order to enjoy it.

DEVELOPING THE ENCYCLOPEDIA HABIT

(Continued from page 263)

encyclopedia. An incidental "library lesson" taught in this manner does not annoy and bore the child. The instruction is given at his own request. For a few minutes he is willing to lay aside his recreational reading to do some reference work.

More than merely teaching the use of the encyclopedia has been accomplished. The library is further tying up with the whole building; library reference is being stimulated; and bits of incidental information are acquired never to be forgotten.

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